

SMS4dads



It's a really simple idea. Dads are really busy before and after the birth - there is no way they'll come to lots of parenting classes... but they do have mobile phones

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SMS4dads sends texts three times a week to the fathers' mobile phone. Messages about connecting to his baby, teamwork with mum and looking after himself. The messages are linked to the birth date so they fit where the family is up to.

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MANY OF THE MESSAGES ARE FROM THE BABY

Although it is noisy in here I will be able to hear your voice from about 20 weeks. Try telling me about the things we will do together



Hey dad. I am going to triple my weight in the first year of life. Don't let this happen to you too.



OTHERS TEXTS ENCOURAGE SUPPORT FOR THE MOTHER

Now is a good time tell her she is doing a great job



If you've been at work all day you might be able to support mum by taking me out for a walk dad. This will give us more time to get to know each other.



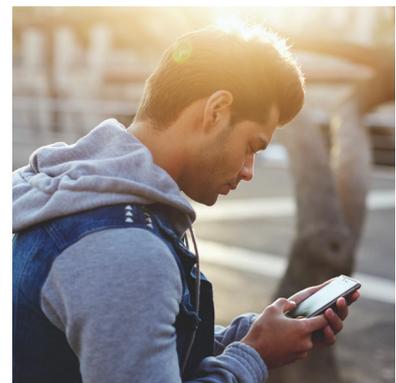
DADS ALSO RECEIVE REGULAR CHECK-IN MESSAGES



Most fathers feel stressed if their new baby cries a lot. How have you coped this week with settling your baby?



FATHERS INDICATING DISTRESS CAN RECEIVE A TELEPHONE CALL FROM A COUNSELLOR OR MENTAL HEALTH PROFESSIONAL



RESULTS

Results from the feasibility study with 520 fathers, including from rural and regional areas, were extremely positive



COMPLETED THE PROGRAM
Dads can opt out anytime by texting back STOP



ENDORSED THE PROGRAM
As helping them in their role as fathers



+ RELATIONSHIP EFFECTS
Said that it helped the relationship with their partner

MOTHERS ARE SUPPORTIVE OF SMS4DADS TOO

It helped my partner to feel part of the "baby process", and that his experiences were also important. This made for a more cohesive family unit. The messages gave us both confidence and helped to avoid fights when extreme fatigue set in

THE EVIDENCE FOR SUPPORTING MEN AS THEY BECOME FATHERS IS NOW STRONG

Fathers with a hands-on, caring relationship with their infants^{1,2,4}, who parent effectively together with the mother³ and who are mentally well⁵ will have children with the best academic and social outcomes. Fathers want to be involved with baby even if they are not sure how. SMS4dads provides an effective, economic way to support fathers to be a positive influence on their child's development.

DR FLETCHER EXPLAINS *"Dads don't want to be on the sideline, they want to be involved as much as they can. But they're flat out in the lead up to the birth and then they rush back to work after a couple of weeks leave. SMS4dads stops dads being isolated and helps the dad-mum team to be the parents that they want to be"*

SMS4dads was developed by a team of researchers led by Associate Professor Richard Fletcher at the University of Newcastle, NSW. Initial funding from beyondblue with donations from the Movember Foundation. Contact Richard.fletcher@newcastle.edu.au



1. Huerta, M. et al. (2013). Fathers' Leave, Fathers' Involvement and Child Development: Are They Related? Evidence from Four OECD Countries, OECD Social, Employment and Migration Working Papers, No. 140, OECD Publishing. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/5k4dlw9w6czq-en> 2. Opondo, C., Redshaw, M., & Quigley, M. A. (2017). Association between father involvement and attitudes in early child-rearing and depressive symptoms in the pre-adolescent period in a UK birth cohort. *Journal of Affective Disorders*. 3. Pruett, M. K., Pruett, K., Cowan, C. P., & Cowan, P. A. (2017). Enhancing Father Involvement in Low Income Families: A Couples Group Approach to Preventive Intervention. *Child Development*, 88(2), 398-407. 4. Sethna, V. F., Perry, E., Domoney, J., Iles, J., Psychogiou, L., Rowbotham, N. E., ... & Ramchandani, P. G. (2017). Father-child interactions at 3-months and 2 years: contributions to children's cognitive development at 2 years. *Infant Mental Health Journal*, 38(3), 378-390. 5. Gutierrez-Galve, L., Stein, A., Hanington, L., Heron, J., & Ramchandani, P. (2015). Paternal depression in the postnatal period and child development: mediators and moderators. *Pediatrics*, 135(2), e339-e347.